

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05
CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04
SIL-01 SSM-03 PM-04 DODE-00 /085 W
----- 026680

R 071141Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9477

INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMCONSUL PORT SAID

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, EG, PINT, PINR

SUBJ: REPORTED SUEZ CANAL PILOT SLOWDOWN/STRIKE

REF CAIRO 16713 FROM PORT SAID,

1. LRO RAISED REPORTED JOB ACTION BY SUEZ CANAL PILOTS (REF-TEL) DURING MEETING WITH MARITIME TRANSPORT UNION PRES TABET EL-SEFARY NOV 6. SEFARY, WHO IS HEADQUARTERED IN SUEZ AND WHOSE UNION MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES ALL CANAL PILOTS (AND ALL OTHER EMPLOYEES IN MARITIME TRADES) CATEGORICALLY DISMISSED ANY SUGGESTION THAT SLOWDOWN/STRIKE HAD TAKEN PLACE. HE HAD CALLED NONE AND IT INCONCEIVABLE, IN HIS VIEW, THAT PILOTS WOULD GO OUT ON THEIR OWN. HE DESCRIBED PILOTS AS EXCEPTIONALLY WELL PAID AND, IF NOT PERFECTLY CONTENT, NOT IN MOOD TO STRIKE. SEFARY STRESSED THAT EGYPT, "WHICH PASSING THROUGH PERIOD OF UNPARALLELED ECONOMIC DIFFICULTY," CANNOT ALLOW PRECIOUS SUEZ CANAL REVENUES TO BE THREATENED. HE CONFIRMED THAT CANAL AUTHORITY WILL INCREASE NUMBER AND "QUALITY" OF ITS EMPLOYEES IN COMING FEW MONTHS.

2. CANNOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT PILOTS HAVE UNDERTAKEN SOME KIND OF WILDCAT JOB ACTION, BUT WE INCLINED TO VIEW THAT BAIRAM HOLIDAY ABSENTEEISM MAY BE CAUSE OF RECENT PORT SAID PILOT SCARCITY. WE ALSO BELIEVE LACK OF QUALIFIED EGYPTIAN PILOTS IS

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REASON FOR SCA'S REPORTED EFFORTS TO HIRE FOREIGN PILOTS;

WAGES WOULD NOT SEEM TO BE THE PROBLEM.

3. BIO NOTE: SEFARY, ABOUT 55, IS ALSO PRES OF ARAB FED-
ERATION OF TRANSPORT WORKERS, REPRESENTING ALL WORKERS IN
TRANSPORTATION IN ARAB WORLD. HE IS REPUTED TO BE MAN GREAT
MORAL COURAGE, NOT EASILY PRESSURED INTO ABANDONING HIS MOD-
ERATE POLITICAL/ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES. RECENT VISIT BY LAND TRANS-
PORT WORKER PRES TO US (WHICH SOURCE OF DEBATE AMONG UNIONISTS
HERE) TOOK PLACE WITH HIS ENCOURAGEMENT. SEFARY IS STRONGLY ANTI-
COMMUNIST, LOOKS WITH PLEASURE ON IMPROVED US-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS,
AND SUPPORTS GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD PROFESSIONAL RE-
LATIONSHIP WITH US LABOR.
EILTS

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